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TEACHERS' PROBLEMS WITH EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN

II

Gifted Children

Pamphlet No. 41

By

ELISE H. MARTENS

Senior Specialist in the Education of Exceptional Children
Office of Education

With an activity unit by

ELEANOR SCHMIDT and MARY PORTER
Cleveland Public Schools

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TEACHERS' PROBLEMS WITH EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN

II : Gifted Children

INTRODUCTION

"Education of all the children of all the people." The principle expressed in these words is so familiar to every teacher of the modern school that the phrase has become proverbial. In teachers' preparatory courses, in conferences of State teachers' associations, in educational publications, on every educational platform one hears and reads repeatedly of the educational birthright of every child, of the responsibility of the school to make of pupil activities an experience in living which is within the child's power of realization and appreciation and which will at the same time help to prepare him for a contributing adult citizenship.

If this is the task of education, then the teacher comes face to face with the problem of adjustment. He must meet the challenge of the unending array of individual differences and individual needs which the pupils in his class present. His is the responsibility of adjusting his attitude and his methods, of adjusting the curriculum and materials to the capacities and the interests of the boys and girls who come daily under his instruction. We have attempted in our general educational scheme to group into one classroom or grade some 30 or 40 or even more children who have reached approximately the same degree of academic achievement. Yet every teacher knows that among those 30 or 40 children there are some who would forge far ahead of accepted standards if given the opportunity to do so, and that there are others who lag far behind in spite of every opportunity given them to work along with their fellows. There are some who suffer from physical handicaps and others who show signs of serious emotional difficulty. To each of these the school owes an equal responsibility for that training which will serve best the individual's own needs and which will make of

him a citizen who will be able and willing to serve his community according to his talents.

In many city school systems attempts have been made to provide for these individual needs of our boys and girls through various systems of classification, of special schools and classes, and of clinical service. In some there are well-organized departments of special education, with excellent supervisory facilities and trained teachers. These are pointing the way toward the means of giving adequate attention to those pupils who deviate seriously from normal in physical, mental, or social equipment. To many who are teaching in such cities this series of publications will not offer much that is new. It is more specifically designed (1) for those teachers who are working in districts in which no special classes exist and who must provide for exceptional children as members of their own groups of supposedly normal pupils; and (2) for teachers of special classes who are handicapped by the absence of constructive supervision and perhaps even by their own lack of adequate preparation for this specialized type of education.

What then is the teacher's responsibility if he belongs to either of these two groups? He cannot avoid the issue or run away from his problem, for there it is facing him day after day as he enters the classroom. If he is to meet it with any measure of success, then he has a fivefold program before him.

First, he must know what the problem is.—Who are "exceptional" children? What types of deviations from normal demand special consideration? What constitutes a *serious* deviation? In answering these questions it is well to point to the classification which has been adopted by committees of the White House Conference. Eight major groups of "exceptional" children are recognized, as follows: (1) The crippled; (2) the deaf and the hard-of-hearing; (3) the blind and the partially seeing; (4) the speech defective; (5) children of lowered vitality, suffering from anemic, pretuberculous, or cardiac difficulties; (6) the mentally retarded; (7) the mentally gifted; (8) children presenting serious behavior problems.

The first five of these groups belong in the general classification of *physically* handicapped children; the next two con-

stitute those who are *mentally* different; and the last group may be considered as *socially* maladjusted. The physical, mental, and social realms are thus all represented among our "exceptional" children. The particular needs of the various groups are of course quite different, but each child in any one of these groups offers a serious challenge to the teacher to seek out that which will mean the most for him individually in his educational development.

The second task before the teacher is to recognize the problem which exists in his own classroom.—The mere knowledge that there are exceptional children in the world will not help him unless he can find out for how many he himself is responsible. The teacher who has been assigned to a special class made up wholly of exceptional children is spared this difficulty, for presumably an accurate diagnosis has already been made of each case. But the teacher who must care for normal and exceptional pupils alike in one room has a real problem on his hands. He must know the symptoms of extreme deviation and he must learn to recognize those symptoms in the children before him. Perhaps he will find that one child cannot see the writing on the blackboard; that another is so hard of hearing that he has to be given a front seat and even there he does not always hear what the teacher says; that a third has been failing in his school work year after year; that a fourth is intellectually so keen that it is hard to keep him busy. It is not uncommon to find a group of four—or even more—such children in the same class, each exceptional in his own way and each presenting different needs. Some of them force themselves upon the teacher's attention; others need to be discovered.

Third, the ability to recognize extreme deviations comes only through careful observation and study of the individual child.—Every child is different from every other child and presents the need for sympathetic, conscientious, intelligent scrutiny. Sometimes this very scrutiny will reveal differences that the teacher had never dreamed of before and will show how very exceptional in one way or another the child really is. Whether in the regular classroom or in a special class the need for child study is the same; for even though a preliminary diagnosis has already been made resulting in the child's assign-

ment to a special class, yet it remains for the teacher to study his abilities and disabilities, his physical and his mental equipment, his personality and his environment. The *whole* child becomes truly educated only when the teacher bends every energy to *know* and to *guide the whole child.*

The fourth responsibility of the teacher is to "apply first aid" to the exceptional children whom he has discovered in his room and whose natures and needs he has made the object of study. However inexperienced or untrained he may be in special education, there are some things which every teacher can do in meeting existing demands of physical, mental, or social deviations if he will but give time and thought to the problem. Particularly in the rural school is the teacher almost always forced to rely upon his own resources in handling the child who is either far below or above normal in intelligence, who needs some special physical attention, or who is causing a serious disturbance through his antisocial conduct. The teacher's daily contact with the child makes him the logical person to give the greatest amount of help at least in an elementary way. It is he who must be prepared to adapt his methods and materials to the peculiar needs and possibilities of each exceptional child. It is he who must know what to do if he finds one hard-of-hearing child, one child with defective vision, and one seriously retarded child in his class. It is he, too, who must be able to meet the parents,[1] to explain the difficulties that prevail, and to secure for the child the attention at home which will supplement the provision which the school is able to make.

Fifth, and last, the teacher should know where to seek further aid of a specialized type.—What resources does the community afford in medical or psychological assistance of clinical nature? What agencies exist in the county—in the State—in the Nation—that may be called upon? How can the teacher make contact with these agencies and what may he expect of them? Help that comes from without can bring to the earnest seeker substantial reenforcement of his own efforts. The resources of a whole nation may literally be

[1] For help in dealing with parents, teachers are referred to the United States Office of Education Bulletin, 1932, No. 14, on "Parents' Problems with Exceptional Children." This may be obtained from the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., at 10 cents per copy.

called upon to help solve the problem of a single child tucked away somewhere in an inconspicuous country school district.

It is to help the teacher carry out this fivefold program in the interests of the exceptional child that this publication is written. The general nature of the problem has already been stated, with an enumeration of the eight major types of exceptional children with which we are concerned. The other phases of the program will be considered in successive pamphlets, each of which will deal with a single type of child. How to recognize extreme deviations, how to study the child, how to meet some of the fundamental problems involved in teaching him, and how to secure specialized aid are all discussed in turn. It is hoped that each teacher may find in this series some tangible values that will answer his questions and that can be applied to the local situation in which he finds himself.

Many teachers, however, will not rest content with this elementary knowledge of "first aid" principles. Some of them will be seeking further training for more efficient service. Specialized courses which are now offered in normal schools, colleges, and universities [1] furnish a real opportunity for enlarging one's understanding of exceptional children and increasing one's skill in dealing with them. Many of these courses are given during summer sessions so that no time need be lost during the school year. Here one may study under competent guidance the nature of subnormality or genius, the psychology of blindness or deafness or speech defect; the mental hygiene of behavior disorders; the mental background of the child who has a crippled body or other serious physical defect. One may study also the possibilities and the limitations inherent in these conditions, their educational needs, and their methods of treatment. And the goal toward which all such study is directed is that which challenges the teacher every day of his life—the ability to minimize the limitations and to capitalize the capacities of each child for his greatest personal happiness and his greatest service to the community.

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[1] See U.S. Office of Education Bulletin, 1931, No. 21, on "Opportunities for the Preparation of Teachers of Exceptional Children." This bulletin may be secured at 5 cents per copy from the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C.

PROBLEMS WITH GIFTED CHILDREN

"Look about us. Whatever the secret of birth, how little interest there is in the United States in the exceptional boy! Our schools, like our motors, must be built for the average. For those who fall below the standard—the defectives—how ample and how sympathetic the provision! But for the exceptional boy how meager the opportunity! At school he is promoted not into a class of superiors, but—what a world away—into a superior class, and not till he manages his own affairs in the world does he find his real mates." [3]

The sentiment expressed in this quotation finds an echoing response in the minds of many students of education and sociology. The gifted child has been, sad to say, the neglected child of the school more than any other included in the groups of exceptional children—neglected because he seems to demand no special attention. He learns so easily, he is a joy to the teacher's heart because "he can always be counted on to recite when called upon." Unless he becomes so bored with the daily routine or chafes under prosaic requirements so that he becomes emotionally upset and disturbs the peace of the classroom, he usually goes his way from one year to the next, successful in ordinary school work but with his real ability unchallenged.

Such a state of affairs is tragic not only for the child but for society. A committee of the White House Conference on Child Health and Protection has stated the problem in no uncertain terms. While there is some difference of opinion as to the actual number of children in our schools who should be classified as "gifted," yet the conviction expressed by the committee regarding the urgency of giving them proper educational attention finds complete endorsement among leaders everywhere. It is a challenge to every man and woman who undertakes the task of teaching the youth of the Nation.

It is agreed that in a democracy more than in any other form of government high-grade leadership is essential. The United States of America with its Congress; with its 48 commonwealths, each with its legislature; with its hundreds of municipalities, each with its own local government; must have intelligent leaders or fail in the struggle. Surely there was never greater need of able leadership than at the present time. And yet there are one million and a half children in our public schools

[3] E. S. Thoughts on Leadership and the Republic. The Atlantic Monthly, January 1933.

with exceptionally good brains and exceptionally high intelligence, who need only the permission and the opportunity to develop the leadership for which they have the foundation; therefore, we urge that the White House Conference, and all intelligent, patriotic citizens of the United States take active and efficient steps to save this large number of children from the idleness, the more or less malicious mischief, and the neglect which is their portion in the average public schools of today. Aside from the injustice to the child himself, it is almost a social crime to neglect these highly endowed children. As Horn well says: "Failure to develop the very bright to their highest capacity represents waste of the kind that we can least afford." [4]

1. WHAT IS MEANT BY THE "GIFTED" CHILD?

Most of the children in this world are of about average intelligence. They are able to complete the work of the elementary school and to go on toward high-school graduation. They learn to manage their own affairs with ordinary prudence, can earn an independent livelihood, and get along with their fellow men reasonably well. Of every 100 children in our schools, about 60 belong in this group. While there are many individual differences among them, they may be said to represent the general average of American intelligence. Of the remaining 40 children, approximately 20 have ability to go beyond the high school into university training. The other 20 are unable mentally to cope with the standard high-school curriculum, and some of them find even the ordinary elementary course extremely difficult or beyond their power of comprehension.

Every teacher has heard something of intelligence tests and intelligence quotients. Speaking in terms of these values, we may say that an intelligence quotient (I.Q.) of 100 ideally represents a normal level of intelligence—that which the average individual possesses. But because normal intelligence cannot be defined as existing only at a single point, and because our tests for measuring intelligence are still not perfect, we say that the range of normal intelligence extends from approximately 90 to 110 I.Q.

As we go up the scale of intelligence beyond 110 I.Q. we find the number of children steadily decreasing, and at 120 I.Q. we have reached the lower limit of the group of very

[4] Special Education: The Handicapped and the Gifted. Committee on Special Classes. White House Conference on Child Health and Protection. New York, The Century Co., p. 549.

bright children. Out of our original 100 children there are not more than 5 or 6 who belong here. Only 2 of the 100 reach an I.Q. of about 128, and only 1 has an I.Q. of 130 or above. At this point we have the child who is exceptionally gifted in his mental endowment and of whom great achievements should be expected. Some children have been found who according to test results have an intelligence quotient of 150, 160, 180, and even higher, but these cases are extremely rare. So much the greater is the obligation to give them that life experience during childhood which will yield the most for their adult contribution to the world.

The intelligence quotient, however, is not the only item that should be mentioned in defining the gifted child. It gives us only the numerical index of the characteristics which are found in him. Every teacher has at times been astonished by the keen insight and the reasoning ability of some child in his room who not only learns quickly the lessons which are assigned him but who reaches far beyond them in the questions which he asks and the problems which he solves. The gifted child is essentially the thinker and the problem solver of a group. He is not content with merely learning what other people say but is eager to think through his own problems and to extend his interests beyond the immediate present into unknown fields. Creative ability is his and creative ability it is which the world needs in its onward march of progress.

It should be kept in mind that the term "gifted child," as we are using it here, does not refer to the child who has a very special talent for music, for art, or for mechanical invention. He may have any one of these talents, but not necessarily so. The "gifted child," as here considered, is the one who has an exceptional intelligence which finds expression in high levels of creative thinking and reasoning.

2. HOW CAN I RECOGNIZE THE EXCEPTIONALLY BRIGHT CHILD?

Usually the youngest children in a grade are among the brightest. The very fact that they are younger than most children in the class shows that they have been able to master the work of the previous grades more rapidly. In a search made for gifted children in the schools of a western State some years ago, the field workers adopted as part of

their working technique the plan of asking the teacher first for the two or three children in the class whom she considered the *brightest*, and next, for the two or three *youngest* children in the class. These did not always correspond, for sometimes the child who is much younger than his classmates does not, because of this very fact, compare favorably with them in the general impression which he makes. He is physically smaller, he is socially immature, sometimes shy and retreating, so that he shrinks into the background of the class picture. But these field workers found that the youngest children were usually identified by the intelligence test which was given them as also among the very brightest of the group.

Some very bright children, however, move along from grade to grade at just the regular pace without ever having the opportunity to quicken their progress through school. Consequently along with the age of the child we need to consider also the quality of his school work, his interests, his ability in creative activities, and whenever possible the results of standardized tests of achievement and of intelligence. As yet the most important single measure of the intellectual capacity of any child is the individual intelligence test. When the result of such a test is joined with the teacher's study of other factors, such as age-grade placement, success in school work, health, personality, interest, and home environment, the final judgment becomes so much the more reliable. Some children of very high intelligence are not doing well in their school work because they are bored, or because there are some physical difficulties or emotional conflicts. Others not so bright but still of good ability are sometimes overrated by their teachers because of their excellent memories, or because of their industry, perseverance, and willingness to follow directions. The individual intelligence test will help us to check these conditions. It will either verify our own judgment or it will challenge us to study further all the facts we can find out about the child.

3. HOW SHOULD THE INTELLIGENCE TEST BE USED?

There are two kinds of so-called "general intelligence tests"—the individual test and the group test. The individual test is given to one child at a time by a teacher or other person who has been specially trained in psychological

testing. The group test may be given to a whole class at one time. Although quite different in nature from the individual test, it also needs careful preparation on the part of the examiner in order to secure accurate results. No teacher should attempt to give either of these tests unless he has had a thorough course of training or unless he is working under expert supervision.

The result of the individual mental test is expressed in terms of "mental age." Group tests yield scores which can usually be converted into mental age. This mental age shows the level of the child's intellectual ability at the time of the test; and if we divide his mental age by his chronological age at the same date the result gives us his intelligence quotient. Paul, for example, is 9 years old. The mental test places his mental age at 12 years. This means that he is able approximately to do the grade of school work expected of a 12-year-old child. His intelligence quotient is the result of dividing 12 by 9, or 133.[5] This is an index of the rate at which Paul's mental development has taken place and shows us approximately how rapidly we can expect him to progress in ordinary school assignments. Both of these figures—the mental age and the intelligence quotient—are thus extremely helpful in planning classroom activities, if one understands their significance and their limitations.

If the teacher is prepared to give psychological tests or if he can call upon some one else to do so, then by all means an individual intelligence test should constitute a part of the inquiry made of the child's ability. Without a test there may be an excellent judgment made on the basis of all available facts, but it is still always a *judgment*—a subjective estimate. With a test, we secure an objective measure that either corroborates or places a doubt upon our judgment. If the former, then we are glad to know that in the light of test results our judgment was correct. If the latter, then we are challenged to study further and find out why there is a disagreement. In either case we have the satisfaction of knowing that the best available, even though not a perfect, measure of objective type was used to help us determine the child's level of intelligence.

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[5] Accurately speaking, this would be 1.33, but the decimal point is omitted in expressing intelligence quotients.

Look, therefore, for clinical service in your community if you yourself are not prepared in this field. Teachers are fortunate who have within the local school department someone who has been psychologically trained and whose time can be used for testing. But do not depend upon the results of any test which you may have attempted to give yourself unless you have had thorough training. A college course *about* tests is not enough, nor yet a brief series of demonstrations. These only lay the foundation for actual and adequate practice carefully supervised. Not until one has "graduated" from all of these, with the approval of the instructor to give tests independently, should one presume to administer them. Better no test at all than an unreliable one.

4. ARE THERE ANY TESTS WHICH THE UNTRAINED TEACHER CAN GIVE SATISFACTORILY TO HELP HIM KNOW THE CHILD BETTER?

Yes, provided he is willing to study directions carefully and to follow directions explicitly. These are not intelligence tests, however, and cannot take the place of intelligence tests in the study of the exceptional child. They do not furnish an intelligence quotient, which, as has been said, is an index of the child's real capacity to progress in his school work. They give only a measure of what the child has actually achieved in reading or arithmetic or spelling or any other subject. For this reason they are called "achievement tests." Because most children do school work which in quality is fairly close to their capacity to achieve, the results of achievement tests and intelligence tests in general agree quite closely. But the exceptional child is often the exception in this respect also. For him the achievement test is valuable because it shows what he *has* done, but the intelligence test is also needed because it shows what he *can* do. Both tests together *plus* the teacher's judgment of his ability *plus* a consideration of other factors already mentioned will give the best possible basis for understanding his mental development.[6]

[6] Any teacher who would like specific help or suggestions in the selection and the use of standardized achievement tests and who has no one in his own school system to look to for advice is invited to write to the U.S. Office of Education, Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. State your problem concretely—particularly the ages and grades of the children to be tested, as well as your purpose in giving the tests. Service will be gladly given so far as it is possible to do so.

5. DO ALL GIFTED CHILDREN BECOME EMINENT MEN AND WOMEN?

No. Great achievement in the world depends upon more than a high intelligence. The leader of men needs not only to think clearly, deeply, and accurately; he needs the power of initiative, the capacity for hard work, and the ability to get along with other people. The creative genius in science or literature or art has not only the ability to invent, to write, to draw; he has an emotional drive which makes him lose himself in his work and press on untiringly toward the realization of his ideal. There is no field of great accomplishment which does not require great power of concentration and at least a fair measure of adjustment to the life about one. The capacity which the gifted child possesses can reach its highest expression only if there are developed along with it traits of character that will make him overcome obstacles and give his best to the world.

6. WHAT IS THE TEACHER'S FIRST RESPONSIBILITY TOWARD THE GIFTED CHILD?

Give him room to grow—freedom to develop—incentive to make constructive use of his creative power. Avoid holding him down to daily lesson assignments that are planned for the mediocre pupil. Give him a chance to cultivate his talents, and place upon him the charge of making the most of them. If he shows an exceptional interest and ability in nature study, stimulate him to bring in unusual specimens, to find out all he can about them, and to lead the class in discussing them. He may some day become a great naturalist. No matter if sometimes he seems to know more than the teacher himself. We have gone beyond the days when teachers must pose as omniscient creatures, fearful of admitting error or ignorance. There are times when the exceptionally gifted child in the classroom actually lives on a level of intellectual power higher than that of the teacher who instructs him, for most of us are made of just ordinary metal. It is a rare privilege to have such a child under one's care, but it is a tremendous responsibility also. Let us do all we can to open the way for him to rise to heights even beyond those which we have attained.

A democracy demands a high type of leadership. The intellectually gifted child of today should become the able

thinker and civic leader of tomorrow. The habits of work which he forms in school, the ideals which he accepts, the breadth of experiences which he enjoys, the responsibilities which he carries are all important aspects of his training for future service. If he is to think through social problems as a man, he must be given the opportunity to begin as a child. The school is certainly the place where the powers of the gifted child should be unloosed and used for all they are worth.

7. IS THE GIFTED CHILD EQUALLY GIFTED IN ALL SUBJECTS?

Every child shows some unevenness in his abilities, and gifted children are no exception to this rule. Sometimes they show definite specialization. Helen was in the low fourth grade. She was 8 years 9 months old. Her intelligence quotient was 155. When a Stanford achievement test was given to her, it was found that in every subject she scored above the standard for her age and grade. This was to be expected because of her high I.Q. But her record in some was higher than in others. The lowest scores were in arithmetic and spelling, in which she reached about high fourth-grade level. Her scores in reading and language were substantially higher, and her scores in science and literature information reached ninth-grade level. This very superior score in science was doubtless due to her early and persistent interest in birds, animals, flowers, and the great out-of-doors. Her interest and ability in literature were due in part to her early training. She had learned to read before going to school and her parents spent more than the usual amount of time in reading to her.

As with Helen, so with most gifted children, a considerable variation may be found in their interests and abilities, but they are usually capable enough in all subjects to do work which is at least satisfactory for their age. Some will exhibit special creative ability in science or mechanics; others may show youthful genius in creative music or art or literature; still others will early display the qualities of true leadership among men; and there will be some who will some day revel in the deep abstractions of philosophical or economic problems. True creative work in *any* field car-

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ries with it the ability to solve problems, which is characteristic of the gifted child. Skill in mere performance, on the other hand, or imitation in some highly specialized field is often found among ordinary folk. A great composer or a great inventor may be thought of as a gifted child who has turned his chief interest and effort toward music or science, but the skillful performer of musical compositions sometimes belongs among the less lofty in intellect who have merely mastered the technique of playing a musical instrument.

8. SHOULD THE GIFTED CHILD BE MADE EQUALLY CAPABLE IN ALL SUBJECTS?

Consider the case of Helen described above. Suppose her teacher were to demand that she cease all work in science and literature and devote herself to arithmetic until she had brought it up to the same general level of attainment. What effect would the attempt at such a leveling process have upon the child's own development? Would it be desirable from the standpoint of her service to society? Anyone with even a slight knowledge of human nature realizes the damage that would be done to her interest, her initiative, and even her disposition. Rebellion—justifiable rebellion—would be the inevitable outcome. Why should she be deprived of the activity that gives her the greatest pleasure just because she seems somewhat less capable—yet capable enough—in other fields? Furthermore, society itself would be the loser, for if the development of her interest and ability to their maximum expression is curbed, then there will be so much less to give to the world's work. If such a leveling process were carried out to its limit, where would be the Edisons, the Mozarts, the Brownings, the Gladstones of the universe?

Specialization of the interests of gifted children is certainly not to be discouraged. What one can rightfully expect is an achievement in all subjects which is commensurate at least with the chronological age of the child. Since gifted children are usually capable in all respects, this should be easily attained. Whatever is achieved beyond this may well be colored by the child's own interests and his desire for expression.

9. WHAT IS THE EDUCATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE CHILD'S CHRONOLOGICAL AGE AND HIS MENTAL AGE?

A child of 10 who has an intelligence quotient of 140 possesses the mental maturity of a child of 14; that is, his level of mental ability as measured by the test, or his "mental age", as it is called, is 40 percent higher than his chronological age. Such a child obviously demands careful consideration, for he presents a picture of physical and social development common to 10-year-olds coupled with an intellectual grasp that far outruns his age.

To teachers of such a child the following suggestions are offered: Treat him with due respect for his thinking powers. Give recognition to—but do not talk about—his superior intellect and understanding. Discuss matters with him at his own mental level. Give opportunity for initiative and responsibility. But remember his lack of life experience, and permit him to be a child of 10 insofar as he is inclined to do so in his social relationships. One teacher who has had wide experience with very bright children says: "Perhaps the one factor which contributes most to the development of the gifted child is the custom of the parents (*and we might add, of teachers*) of habitually conversing with the child as one adult converses with another, respecting his opinions, answering questions intelligently and truthfully, or studying with him problems which he is seeking to solve and encouraging him always to delve and think until he finds the reason." [7]

Dick was a small boy of 8 years who had the mental ability of a boy of 13. He was in the fourth grade at school. There were signs of maladjustment. He dreamed in the classroom. When called on to take part he frequently failed. His mother came to the psychological adviser of the school with a story of behavior difficulties at home. Then one day, in open rebellion against a school assignment which he failed to do, Dick played truant. The case was investigated carefully and it was found that this same boy enjoyed sitting at home with his father at night working out problems in algebra; that the stars and the seas and the rocks were subjects of keen interest to him; that he played the piano well and had actually written some simple musical compositions. Yet his reading vocabulary was extremely limited.

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[7] Stedman, Lulu M., Education of gifted children, p. 185. [Italics are ours.] New York, World Book Co., 1924.

When the Stanford achievement test was given him, he showed in arithmetic an ability equal to that of a boy of 17 years, while in reading his achievement barely reached the level of his own chronological age.

His judgment was immature; his social habits were childish. He seemed to crave companionship; yet he scarcely knew how to play with children of his own age. His mother treated him at home as a normal 8-year-old child is treated by many parents, directing and controlling, giving him little opportunity to develop independence of thought in keeping with his mental powers.

A strange combination this—as many brilliant children are strange combinations to those who do not understand them. What this boy needed was a greater consideration for his level of thought both at home and at school. He rebelled against parental control and he rebelled against much of the material that was given him to read in school. The subject matter did not interest him, so why learn the words? When the librarian of the school was taken into confidence and Dick was permitted to browse in the library with kindly suggestion and assistance, he was found looking for books on the stars and the wonders of the earth. When simply written books in these fields were furnished him, he soon learned to read well. When the cooperation of the mother was secured, so that greater opportunity was given him at home to work independently and to develop the consciousness of his own responsibility, behavior difficulties ceased.

It would not have solved the school problem to take this boy out of the fourth grade and place him in the eighth, which was the level of his mental ability. In the first place, he could not read well enough to work there satisfactorily. In the second place, he was small of stature, physically and socially quite immature, and would have been vastly out of place with boys and girls who were entering the adolescent period. He needed rather to be given every possible opportunity to enrich his reading experience, to contribute to the classroom activities through his interest in scientific subjects, to develop his musical ability, and to participate in social situations with other children. When his reading ability became established, he was invited to give an occasional book report during the library hour on books of his own choosing. Great indeed was his triumph when he

found he could actually hold the attention of an admiring class with the thrilling story of the planets and the stars. Having made a place for himself in the group, his progress was assured. Soon some rapid advancement through the grades seemed in order, giving him the joy of reward and of success. Most recent reports of his progress showed that he was making a good adjustment.

10. WHAT SOCIAL CONTACTS AND PLAY ASSOCIATIONS SHOULD BE DEVELOPED?

The story of Dick illustrates the loneliness which sometimes characterizes the life of the mentally gifted child. His high mental maturity, coupled with his chronological and physical immaturity, makes it difficult for him to find companions on the playground. The older boys and girls have little interest in him; the younger ones play games that are "too babyish" for him. Thus this type of child may be a solitary figure, seeking pleasure in books or in projects of his own making, sometimes—as Dick did—even developing unsocial attitudes through it all.

Teachers are wise to encourage at all times social contacts with children of approximately the same physical and social maturity. Dick could not have played successfully with children who were 12 or 13 years old, but he could be and was helped to develop a happy relationship with 9- and 10-year-olds who were not so far beyond him in physical growth and social judgment but that he had some interests in common with them. The case of 7-year-old Joan was quite different. She was in the fourth grade at school, yet she was so tall and sturdy that no one considered her out of place in the classroom. On the playground, too, her place was well established among her classmates, whose equal she was not only mentally but also socially and physically.

A very significant photograph used to be shown by Bird T. Baldwin, late director of the Iowa Child Welfare Bureau, picturing four children, all 13 years old and all having an intelligence quotient of approximately 120. Yet the four differed remarkably in physical size and social maturity and interest. Standing in a row they represented a series of steps, each higher than the one before. The shortest one was a small boy in the eighth grade, physically immature,

who enjoyed playing with children of his own age and was a leader among them. The tallest one was a girl who had reached physical maturity, large and well-built. She was working in the high school with students much older than herself, sharing their interests and their responsibilities, and she was doing it successfully. So it is that each child is an individual requiring the treatment which is suited to his own needs. Some are social as well as intellectual equals of much older children; others may be intellectually advanced, but socially they still need to remain in the ranks of their own age-groups. All should be given the opportunity to enjoy as many of the normal play experiences of childhood as can be fitted into their interests.

11. IS THE VERY BRIGHT CHILD IN DANGER OF DEVELOPING POOR HEALTH?

All the studies that have been made of bright children indicate that the percentage of them enjoying good health is just as large as that of mentally normal children. In fact, one of the conclusions drawn from an extensive study of gifted children is that "the gifted group is, as a whole, physically superior to the various groups used for comparison." [8] This does not mean, of course, that there are not individual children of high mental ability who suffer from nervous or organic weakness, just as many other children do. But there is no reason to believe that a child's physical condition is below normal just because he has high intellectual capacity, nor is any harm done through wholesome mental activity in keeping with that capacity. It is understood, to be sure, that there should be for him as for any other child a definite program of recreation, of physical exercise, and of social contact which may supplement his intellectual pursuits and encourage the growth of a sound body as well as a sound mind.

12. WHAT IS THE RELATION BETWEEN SCHOOL ADJUSTMENT AND SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT OF THE GIFTED CHILD?

William Healy and Augusta Bronner,[9] well-known specialists in dealing with problems of child guidance, tell the story

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[8] Terman, Lewis M., Genetic Studies of Genius, Stanford University Press, 1925, p. 171.

[9] Healy, William, *and* Bronner, Augusta F. How Does the School Produce or Prevent Delinquency? The Journal of Educational Sociology, 6 : 450–470, April 1933.

of John, who was 9 years old and already had the reputation of being the bad boy of the neighborhood.

His delinquencies were of an aggressive, adventuresome type, including staying away from home, long hours at night with older bad companions, some stealing, and a small amount of truancy. The case was particularly interesting because the parents were altogether of a good sort and the home had much to offer. This boy was in the fourth grade doing poor school work and it was proposed to place him in the third grade on account of this. We ascertained, however, that he was very much interested in geography, that he read much, and had some little talent for drawing. He was an energetic, active youngster, very fond of sports.

The psychological examination which was given John showed that he had an I.Q. of 125, with ability in reading and general information considerably above his age and grade. His reasoning powers were particularly good. Healy and Bronner tell the rest of the story as follows:

At our suggestion he was advanced to the fifth grade and given some special tutoring in arithmetic, in which otherwise he would be found deficient. He maintained himself readily in the higher grade and within a short time was able to break off his associations with the older dull group with whom he had been in delinquency. His drawing and reading interests were fostered, and through these and the other new mental content derived from his advancement he was able to find quite sufficient satisfactions other than from antisocial behavior. Succeeding years have shown an increasing stability and assumption of responsibility that were undoubtedly due more to school adjustment than any other factor.

This story gives a living example of the tremendous effect school experiences have upon a child's social adjustment. Would it be too drastic to say that the school is sometimes actually responsible for the delinquency of its pupils? Its failure to make the needed adjustment for the gifted child leaves wide open the avenue for seeking satisfaction in unaccepted ways. Adventure the child will have. If he cannot get it through school activities under kindly adult supervision, he is likely to find it elsewhere and with little regard for adult approval.

13. SHALL THE GIFTED CHILD BE PERMITTED TO "SKIP" GRADES?

No doubt the unusually bright child can and should advance somewhat more rapidly than the average pupil. Habits of laziness and antisocial reactions can so easily

take hold of the pupil whose work is too easy for him. This is illustrated by the story just told of John. "Skipping" grades, however, without any opportunity to cover or make up the work that is "skipped", is a dangerous practice. There are too many examples of difficulty in an advanced grade because the child has "skipped" a lower grade in which some of the vital subject matter preparatory to the advanced work was presented. Before you recommend that a boy or girl "skip" from the fourth to the sixth grade or from the low seventh to the low eighth grade, make sure that provision is made for mastery of the intervening subject matter, either through individual coaching of the child (as was done with John) or through some other means which will leave no gap in his knowledge.

Betty was a bright child. She "skipped" the low fifth grade entirely, passing immediately from the high fourth to the high fifth. Now it happened that, in the school in which she was enrolled, the course of study in arithmetic for the low fifth grade included an introduction to fractions, with intensive work on the addition and subtraction of fractional and mixed numbers. In the high fifth grade she was expected to go ahead with multiplication and division of the same type of numbers, success in which depended upon the ability to do the simpler processes. Yet, with a change of teachers, no one saw to it that she had sufficient explanation and practice in these to enable her to feel "at home" with them and to do the more advanced work without stumbling. Consequently there was a long period of time during which she was deeply distressed and unable to cope with situations set before her. Ultimately through her own persistence she conquered the difficulty, but a lasting impression of baffled discouragement remained with her as a result of the experience.

Much to be preferred to the practice of "skipping" grades under any condition is the plan of rapid progress by which a child, or a group of children, is given the opportunity to cover 2 terms' work in 1 term or 2 years' work in 1 year. In this way no vital material need be omitted. The complete course of study is covered insofar as is necessary for continued success in advanced grades, and the child has no

experience of a gap of knowledge that must sometime—somehow—be bridged.

Yet even in this practice let us not go too far or too fast. There are many dangers of social maladjustment when the 13- or 14- or 15-year-old boy finds himself a college freshman without adequate social experience to mingle comfortably with the older students, even though in mental maturity he is able to cope with college problems. A reasonable amount of acceleration supplemented by the more abundant life of richer, fuller, more varied experiences will give him legitimate outlet for his ability. Tasks in school hard enough to challenge his capacity and to hold his interest, and with them additional out-of-school experiences with music, with literature, on the farm, in the shop, in social service, in the church—these will make for a well-balanced development which could never be secured by a mad rush through the grades and into college.

The experience of one supervising principal gives some indication of what many educators are thinking on this problem. He tells of a group of bright children who under his own direction were advanced through the elementary and high schools as rapidly as they could go. One girl graduated from high school with honors at the age of 13. Another child—a boy—went to Princeton University and stood third in his class upon graduation. Another completed his course at Columbia University and became a member of the faculty. A fine record, it is true, yet each one of these and others in the group came back in later years and told the principal that they thought it had been a mistake to "take advantage of them just because they were able to rush through." They had not the maturity that comes with experience and were not able to compete socially with their older associates either in college or afterwards. And then this principal adds very wisely that "few products I have ever heard of are improved by speed of completion, whether the product be an automobile, some form of fruit, or what not; and I believe children do need this gradual ripening process of full time in school to secure the best results in a sensible way." "*Full* time in school" may be more than some of us would ask for the intellectually superior child,

but at least let his pace in school be determined on the basis of his mental capacity *plus* his physical development *plus* his social maturity. Each of these three is an important factor in guiding the *whole* child.

14. HOW CAN THE TEACHER IN THE SMALL SCHOOL ENRICH THE CURRICULUM TO MEET THE NEEDS OF VERY BRIGHT CHILDREN?

If only one child in a hundred has an I.Q. of 130 or above, it is needless to say that not many such children will appear in any one school. Many classes will be without them entirely. Children with intelligence quotients between 120 and 130 are likely to be found in somewhat greater numbers within the school, and individual classes will frequently boast of having several of them within their ranks. Much, of course, depends upon the intellectual level of the community from which the school draws its pupils.

The small rural school in which several or even all grades are under the care of the same teacher offers much greater opportunity to provide for the bright pupil than many teachers think. The usual query is: Since I have so many grades, how can I find time to meet the needs of these intellectually superior children? Many grades offer the very opportunity that you need, for there the bright child can be given a wealth of experiences originating with any grade in the room. Perhaps he will do arithmetic with the fourth grade, read with the sixth grade, study geography and civics with the fifth grade, sing with the whole group, and write and draw as the muses inspire him. The flexibility of individual pupils' programs is promoted rather than limited through the presence of several grades in the same room.

If the activity curriculum is in progress, then an outlet is provided for the talents of all children. The teacher who knows the technique of planning activity units will have no great difficulty in finding opportunities for enriching the experiences of the gifted child. Suppose the topic of study is "Shelter." That subject opens wide the door for historical research into the types of housing of ancient peoples. It provides the means for a geographic survey through the study of the homes of peoples of today. It gives an introduction into the realm of civics and sociology. It makes possible the application of arithmetic to concrete problems

of construction. It leads the way to the writing of drama and fiction and poetry. Achievement in all these activities will be dependent upon the age and the ability of the pupil, and the gifted child should naturally find unlimited opportunities for expression. Relieved of the monotonous drill of which he has no need, he can spend his time in rich and varied experiences of research and exploration which will contribute to the product of the whole group.

15. HOW CAN THE PROGRAM OF THE WHOLE SCHOOL CONTRIBUTE TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF GIFTED CHILDREN?

The larger a school becomes the more gifted children one is likely to find in it. Several or all the teachers can combine their efforts in planning activities that will meet the needs of all bright pupils. One school [10] with an enrollment of approximately 300 children carried on a school paper for a number of years. Only children with high grades who had time for extra work were permitted to join the staff. They were chosen from all grades 5 to 8. The objectives of the activity were: (1) An enrichment program for gifted children; (2) an elementary knowledge of journalism for these children; and (3) realization of such values as citizenship, unity of spirit, and school pride. The results are described as wholly gratifying:

> These gifted children were given work of the type which interested most of them and they carried on splendid research in the field of journalism. They became familiar with the use of newspapers, their value, their dangers. They studied Benjamin Franklin's journalistic career, and learned about such men as Henry Clay, William Randolph Hearst, and many others. Their interest in this work was stimulated, so that some of them have carried it on in high school.
>
> The value of the paper to the rest of the school was inestimable. It was always sold out and the money accruing from it was used in buying athletic goods and library equipment. The good citizenship and school spirit for which this school is known can be traced directly to the inspiration gained from the school paper.

Such a project as this is only one of many which can take the form of clubs or so-called "extracurricular activities." There are so many possibilities here that a whole book has been written about them.[11] The authors of this book em-

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[10] In Butte, Mont. The report of this activity was contributed by Catherine Nutterville, School Psychologist.

[11] Osburn, W. J. *and* Rohan, Ben J., Enriching the Curriculum for Gifted Children. New York, The Macmillan Co., 1931. 408 p.

phasize the importance of hobbies for gifted children and suggest a wide variety of materials. Radio club, forestry club, mechanics' club, nurses' club, arts and crafts club, salesmanship club are all discussed in detail on the basis of actual experimentation within a school system. Many teachers would find it possible to organize similarly in their own schools for the enrichment of the experiences of gifted children.

16. UNDER WHAT CONDITIONS IS A SPECIAL CLASS FOR GIFTED CHILDREN FEASIBLE?

There is still much difference of opinion on this point. Some would answer, "Never." Others would say, "Whenever the number of available children permit it." In school systems in which gifted children have actually been grouped into separate classes, the sentiment in favor of such a procedure has developed into real enthusiasm.

Intellectually superior children have been gathered together from a whole school or from several schools and have been organized into miniature communities of their own, not, however, without opportunity for contact with other children in various types of activities in which all can join. Children who are considered eligible for such classes usually have intelligence quotients of at least 120, and in some cases the lower limit stands at 125 or 130.

17. DOES THE SEGREGATED CLASS FOR GIFTED CHILDREN LEAD TO EGOTISM AND SOCIAL SNOBBISHNESS?

There has been some feeling on the part of those who object to special classes for gifted children that this is true. Yet those who have had experience with them say that the problem is no more serious, and perhaps less so, in a special class than in a regular one. If rightly handled, such a class should indeed lessen the possibilities for self-glorification. In the regular class, the gifted child finds himself so easily surpassing other children that he may very quickly form a false notion of his own superiority. As a member of a special class, however, in which he is only one of a group, he finds others who are just as bright as or brighter than he is. This is likely to exert a very wholesome influence against any tendency to egotism on his part.

Many of the unwholesome social reactions on the part of gifted children originate in the home, when parents yield to foolish pride and encourage the feeling of superiority in their

children. If parents can be led to understand and to accept the privilege of the special class without demonstration and if the school will organize and carry it on unostentatiously without emphasis upon the child's superior intellect, the dangers of undesirable social reaction will be minimized.

The segregated class is not necessarily an isolated class. On the playground, in school assemblies, in club work, and even in some subjects of the school curriculum, its members mingle freely with other children, standing or falling on the basis of their own ability to take part in school activities. Thus they are given the double advantage of an enriched program with other children like themselves, and of community experience with children of all levels of intelligence whose abilities are quite different from their own yet quite as necessary for carrying on our world civilization and culture. The intellectually gifted child, his teacher, and his parents need to appreciate the things which other children can do better than he can, and to recognize the fact that they are all needed quite as much as he is in this great task of living together in the same world.

The real purpose of the special class lies in the assignment of tasks which challenge the child's interest and capacity, the enrichment of the curriculum to include a wide variety of experiences which are not possible in a regular class, the opportunity to think and to discuss with other children of equal ability the problems of life within their grasp, the development of initiative and independence of thought, and last, but not least, the realization of responsibility to the community, looking toward the use of their powers for the benefit of mankind. The last and most vital of these purposes will be utterly defeated if egotism is allowed to take root through unwise administration.

18. WHAT KIND OF A PROGRAM SHOULD BE PLANNED FOR A SPECIAL CLASS OF GIFTED CHILDREN?

The following statement of the committee on special classes of the White House Conference [12] provides an excellent answer to this question:

Enrichment classes are practically all conducted on the activity plan. Fixed desks have been replaced by tables and chairs, and there is the

[12] Special Education: The Handicapped and the Gifted. Committee on Special Classes. White House Conference on Child Health and Protection. New York, The Century Co. pp. 543–544.

utmost freedom for both children and teachers. The understanding is usually that the group will cover the year's work in the academic branches of the usual curriculum for any particular grade, and perhaps one new subject. Beyond that their time is their own, and in consultation with the teacher, they may spend it as seems best. The result is a wide range of activity, following as far as possible the desires of the individual children or of groups of children, and doing everything with an enthusiasm and a thoroughness that must be seen to be fully appreciated.

The rooms are usually provided with exceptionally good lists of books including encyclopedias, dictionaries, and other reference books. The children often work as much outside of the room as they do inside. They spend considerable time visiting important industrial plants, such as banks, newspaper offices, factories of various kinds; Government institutions, such as courts and post offices; educational institutions, such as art museums and natural history museums.

The activity unit [13] seems to offer the most promising method for coordinating the entire program about a central theme or interest. In one school the class for gifted children was organized upon its own initiative into a miniature civic community in which every school activity found its function. Another class became the headquarters for the school bank, actually receiving deposits and handling the money. Still another class wove all its activities for a semester about the topic of transportation. In all of these situations there is no dearth of opportunity for development in thinking, in making decisions, in self-reliance, cooperation, and other desirable character traits. So also the skillful teacher finds the opportunity for giving experience in creative writing, creative art, and creative music. Many intellectually gifted children have real capacity in these directions and even though they may never become famous musicians, authors, or poets, still their lives will be made so much richer through their ability to appreciate the fine arts.

19. WHAT CAN THE SMALL HIGH SCHOOL DO FOR THE GIFTED CHILD?

The same principles apply to elementary and high-school work alike. The gifted child needs to be given some opportunity to *economize* time in preparation for his life's work, but he needs also the opportunity to *enrich* his time with an abundance of worth-while, stimulating, and challenging experiences. The usual method of permitting him to carry

[13] See pp. 31-45 for an example of an activity unit used with a class of gifted children.

more than the regular four subjects and to graduate in a shorter time is only a partial solution of his problem, if indeed it is a solution at all. What he needs most of all is to broaden his horizon of thought, to enlarge his contacts, to use his reasoning powers to their capacity, and—more even than any of these—to realize and to accept his social obligations to his fellowmen. If this last need is not met, then the satisfaction of every other will be of little avail.

Dr. Elmer E. Jones, for 9 years a member of the Chicago Crime Commission, has told of finding a young criminal with an intelligence quotient of over 140. Born in a Chicago alley, of ignorant parents, he went through and forced members of his gang to go through a technical high school in order to find out all about—explosives! He is at large today, after escaping from prison, too clever to let the police catch him again.[14]

All the enrichment that could be crowded into high-school science probably meant to this boy only a greater use of his powers for evil, and to society only a more serious menace from his exploits.

The content of any high-school course can be filled with possibilities for creative work and constructive genius. A curriculum committee in the city of New York included the following activities among those which it recommended for enriching the course in high-school English: Writers' workshop, poetry club, composition of pageants, marionette productions, scenario writing, preparation of broadcasts, writing of school songs, magazine writing, public speaking, writing editorials, and journalism. The Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University is issuing an "Enriched Teaching Series" for high schools. In separate volumes suggestions are given for the enriched teaching of each of the following subjects: English, mathematics, science, commercial subjects, physical education, and Latin. No doubt other subjects will be considered in forthcoming volumes. In every course the individual interests of the pupil can be encouraged through extensive research into new fields of knowledge and through activities which will make it possible for all to share in the knowledge gained by any member of the class.

[14] Knode, Joy C. The State university needs a new officer. School and Society, 36: 630–632, November 12, 1932.

Aside from the enrichment of a particular course of academic nature, is it not well to give to every gifted high-school student some contact with music and art? Choral work, orchestra, musical appreciation, the fine arts, home arts, and art appreciation are all replete with possibilities for making his a more abundant life. Bring him in touch with the æsthetic side of life at least to the extent of appreciation, if not of actual performance. Specialization will come soon enough. Let his high-school days be a well-balanced experience in as many fields as possible.

20. WHAT CAN THE TEACHER DO TO HELP THE CAUSE OF THE GIFTED CHILD?

We have organizations designed to help the crippled, the blind, the deaf, the mentally retarded. Practically every type of handicapped child is sponsored by some public or private agency. Gifted children are as yet without any such support. To some it may seem preposterous even to think of organized effort on his behalf, for is he not perfectly capable of taking care of himself? Others, recognizing the real issue at stake, are eager that clinical services and individual resources should be available quite as much to the gifted child as to the handicapped child. Some child-guidance clinics now give attention to the gifted child, but usually only because a serious emotional problem or other behavior difficulty has arisen. What we need is a careful analysis of his abilities and a wise guidance of his education. We need, also, the "big brother" and "big sister" attitude extended to the gifted child who is economically unable to find the means of self-expression. We need the active interest of parent-teacher organizations. Most of all, perhaps, we need the active interest of educational associations, for they are in a position to advance his cause directly through their school organization. Every means that can be used to promote the welfare of the gifted child will also promote the welfare of the community to which he will some day make his contribution.

The individual teacher represents a powerful factor in all these activities. The teacher's interest in the gifted child will lead him to find out more about his characteristics, his needs, and his possibilities. He will seek out the possibilities for additional training in teaching methods peculiarly adapted

to the needs of gifted children. Greater knowledge in these fields will make it possible for the teacher to talk more intelligently about them, to sponsor their cause in group discussions, to bring it to the attention of school authorities and community organizations, always with the precaution of avoiding publicity. By no means permit a given child or a given group of children to become the center of public attention or the subject of community gossip. That will be the surest way of spoiling the whole project. One of the most disconcerting results that have come from studies made of gifted children has been the publicity attached to them, with the resulting influence upon attitude of both parents and children. Some parents, in fear lest there be damaging results, have refused to permit their child to be entered in such investigations. The common-sense procedure is one which will open up all the possibilities for development of the child's capacities but say little about them. The teacher can do this, first of all, in his own class; second, through the influence of his actions; and, third, through the contacts which he is able to make with school and community leaders.

SUGGESTIONS FOR READING

ADAMS, FAY, *and* BROWN, WALKER. Teaching the bright pupil. New York, Henry Holt & Co., 1930. 249 p.

A manual of practical suggestions for adjusting the work of the junior and senior high school to the interests and needs of bright pupils. It includes in its classification of "bright pupils" the upper 20 percent of the school population, with intelligence quotients of 110 or above. Administrative problems and teaching methods are considered. It is an excellent compendium of concrete suggestions for enrichment in each of the fields of subject matter taught in junior and senior high school.

GODDARD, H. H. School training of gifted children. New York, World Book Co., 1928. 226 p.

Considers the education of gifted children as it has been organized in Cleveland, Ohio. Includes among the "gifted" all those with intelligence quotients of 120 or above, though the I.Q. is not the sole determiner of membership in the special group. Describes the classes at work, their objectives, and their results.

HOLLINGWORTH, LETA S. Gifted children: Their nature and nurture. New York, The Macmillan Co., 1926. 374 p.

A discussion of the psychology of gifted children, their need of careful education, and the importance of proper training to the democracy of civilization. It presents with scientific accuracy and simplicity the information which a teacher would wish to possess.

OSBURN, WORTH JAMES, *and* ROHAN, BEN J. Enriching the curriculum for gifted children. New York, The Macmillan Co., 1931. 408 p.

Proposes activities for children of superior mental ability without the organization of separate classes for them. Based upon an experiment worked out in the schools of Appleton, Wis.

STEDMAN, LULU M. The education of gifted children. New York, World Book Co., 1924. 190 p.

The author presents the results of actual classroom contact with gifted children. Various types of case studies are presented, both of children who are generally gifted and of those who have specific talents. Recommendations are made for enrichment of curriculum and teaching methods.

WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE, Special Education: The handicapped and the Gifted. New York, The Century Co., pp. 537–550.

Report of the committee of the White House Conference which studied the needs of the gifted child and the provisions which have been made for him. Recommendations for procedure are offered.

AN ACTIVITY UNIT FOR GIFTED CHILDREN

HANSEL AND GRETEL

By Eleanor Schmidt and Mary Porter, *Cleveland, Ohio*

[Note: There is no subject that offers more possibilities for self-expression and enrichment of emotional experience than music. This account of an activity unit woven about the story of Hansel and Gretel shows clearly how music can be made the center of a classroom program for gifted children, not only for its own sake but as a medium through which even primary children can be given abundant opportunity for coordinating all class activities. We are grateful to Miss Schmidt and Miss Porter for permitting us to print this contribution]

This unit of work was worked out at Hazeldell Elementary School, Cleveland, Ohio, by a group of gifted children in grades 1A to 3B. There were 16 girls and 12 boys in the group, ages ranging from 6½ to 8 years. The I.Q.'s of the group ranged from 121 to 145 with a median of 129. The children came from average homes in a good middle-class community.

Teacher's Aims

1. To stimulate an appreciation of really fine music.
2. To develop the ability to sing well, and to have the child enjoy singing.
3. To develop language abilities.
   (*a*) Free expression before group.
   (*b*) Use of correct grammatical forms.
   (*c*) Vocabulary building.
4. To acquaint the child with books having music as their subject.
5. To present a situation with many opportunities for creative work in language, art, and music.
6. To develop a sense of responsibility and a spirit of cooperation in the child through the activity of giving a play.

Children's Aims

1. To give a play for an audience.
2. To sing for sheer enjoyment.
3. To express their own ideas and originality in writing the dialog for the play.
4. To work with materials (paint, wood, paper, crayons).

5. To produce work that brings approval from the group.
6. To make stage properties and programs so that the play situation becomes more real.

Origins of Interest

1. Hearing story of opera read to group.
2. Listening to music from opera.
3. Seeing picture postcards depicting scenes from the Grimm fairy tale, also Hansel and Gretel cut-outs from a magazine (Pictorial Review, June 1925).

Excursion

Trip to lumber yard to buy wood for the framework of the Cookie House.

Social Science Concepts Learned

1. That it costs money to go to an opera or to a "show".
2. That enjoying an opera is a high type of entertainment and recreation.
3. That the music is the most important part of an opera.
4. That one receives a program upon entering a theater.
5. That there are different kinds of programs, some of which are very decorative.
6. That an actor puts himself wholeheartedly into the part he is portraying.
7. That stage shifting must be quick and accurate.
8. That each member of the cast contributes to the success of the play.
9. That the scenery and properties help to make the situation more real.
10. That there are different kinds of operas.
11. That an opera has its own musical terminology.

Outcomes

A. Habits:
   1. Keeping at a task until it is brought to a successful finish.
   2. Cleaning up after work.
      (*a*) Washing paste brushes.
      (*b*) Washing paint brushes.
      (*c*) Throwing waste in basket.
   3. Bringing chairs to conference in a quiet and orderly fashion.
   4. Paying attention while another person is talking.
   5. Courtesy to the group that is working, by remaining quiet.
   6. Neatness in arranging books on the reading table.
   7. Working on one's own responsibility in selecting material for the play and in studying lessons.
   8. Promptness in arriving at school and in preparing lessons and material for play.

B. Attitudes:

1. Appreciation of the work of other children.
2. Respect for authority.
3. Obedience to the rule of the group.
4. Willingness to help other children.
5. Willingness to cooperate with the group.
6. Interest in operas as a group.
7. Appreciation of literature dealing with operas and other musical subjects.
8. Appreciation of the work it takes to write a play.
9. Appreciation of good music and greater joy in singing.
10. Subordination of personal wishes to the general best good of the play.

C. Skills.—Increased ability in:

1. Talking before an audience.
2. Expressing oneself easily and freely.
3. Singing in unison with piano accompaniment.
4. Working with tempera paints.
5. Originating designs.
6. Using good color combinations.
7. Painting and drawing action figures.
8. Making use of new words introduced.
9. Organizing and reorganizing material in writing the play.
10. Concentrating for longer periods of time.
11. Working without direction.

Procedure

The story of "Hansel and Gretel", in its opera version, was read to the children as any other story might be. It was familiar to most of them, but they all enjoyed hearing it again in its new version. That same afternoon the overture to the opera was played to them on the Victrola and the selections from the opera were picked out for the children. They were told in what part of the story the music occurred. It was then suggested to them that they have a Hansel and Gretel play and include in it some of the songs from the opera, making it resemble an operetta.

This delighted the children and they enthusiastically began to plan costumes and stage settings. However, it was thought better to get the story well in mind before proceeding further. The children then set to work to outline the three acts of the opera. When they forgot some of the incidents the story was reread from different books.

One act was done at a time; sometimes the outlining of only a half of an act was accomplished in an afternoon. This work was usually followed by a free dramatization of the act being considered. There were many casts at first, every child in the room having a chance to show his dramatic ability. Naturally some children showed more talent than others, and the children were quick in sensing this. They showed good judgment in choosing their permanent casts, of which there were three.

The class as a whole then began to write the dialog. Their background was still further enriched through additional selections read by the teacher and through their own reading from books on the conference table accessible to all. Also during this time the children were learning the songs from the opera and fitting them into the play at the appropriate places. They made up a dance to the music "Dance with Me", and were engaged in hunting materials as to how Humperdinck became interested in writing his opera. This material was later utilized in writing a program note. In reading from the various books the children found out the differences between the opera version of the story and the Grimm fairy tale. This proved helpful in the dramatizations as it brought out the traits of the characters. For example, according to Humperdinck, the mother was really a sympathetic person, but she had become exasperated; and Gretel was the brighter of the two children and hence was the more cautious. In discussing the music of the opera, the children learned the meaning of the word "folk song" and were told which songs in the score were based on German folk songs. In these discussions the meanings of other terms were given, such as "overture", "opera", "libretto", "score", "operetta", etc. This information made the opera and the work the children were engaged in more meaningful to them.

Opera and theater programs were placed on the conference table for the children to examine. They noticed the differences in the programs and were especially attracted by the ones having decorative covers. Later, in making their own programs, they utilized some of the ideas that they had received from this activity.

Throughout all the work the children were requested to solve their own discipline problems. They formulated

"behavior standards" which were charted and placed where they could be referred to. These standards were:

We will not laugh at a mistake.
We will cooperate with one another.
We will not interrupt the person who is talking.
We will not make unnecessary noise.

The construction of the "Cookie House" was begun early. The frame work was made by several boys and was then covered with brown paper. The slanting roof was adorned with brightly colored cookies and candy canes, and the sides were covered with most unusual shingles. The rest of the properties were made the week before the play was given. The oven was made from a large cardboard box covered with black construction paper, Hansel's cage from a radio box painted green, the sides having been knocked out half way down and replaced by black paper bars. The scenery for the woodland scene was painted with tempera on very large sheets of brown paper and then tacked up over the blackboard, which was the back of the stage.

The play was given in the classroom, as it seemed a much more suitable place for small children than the auditorium. For the first act, the forest scenery was covered over with curtains, and the properties were two small stools, a small table, the oven, and a cupboard (Hansel's cage draped with cheesecloth). In the second act, the scenery was uncovered, the oven hidden by pale green curtains, and the cage taken out. The "Cookie House" had been covered by a screen during the first two acts. This was removed for the third act, the oven uncovered, and the cage placed in the middle of the stage. All stage shiftings were done by the children alone.

The draw curtains were of unbleached muslin, one curtain being decorated with a picture of Hansel, the other with a picture of Gretel. Wings were formed on either side of the curtain by suspending from a wire large sheets of brown paper ornamented with cookies and candy canes. These served to conceal both properties and actors.

Costumes were made at home by the mothers, and an attempt was made to keep them as simple as possible.

The children gave three performances of the play, one for the mothers, and two for groups of children.

Outline of Work

Knowledges, Skills, and Attitudes Acquired	Activities
I. *Singing abilities developed:*	Learning songs from the opera by Humperdinck.
1. To sing difficult melodies accurately.	
2. To keep pitch.	
3. To sing in unison with clear sweet voices and tones of light quality.	
4. To follow piano accompaniment:	
(*a*) When accompaniment carries melody.	
(*b*) When accompaniment has no assisting qualities and only supplies harmony.	
5. To sing with rythm.	
6. To express the mood of the melody.	
II. *Music appreciation values developed:*	Music appreciation lessons with the use of the following records:
1. To pick out the different melodies in the overture.	1. Overture to "Hansel and Gretel."
(*a*) "Evening Prayer."	
(*b*) "Song of Our Fairy."	
(*c*) "The Witch's Charm."	
2. To appreciate the beauty of the music.	2. "Witch's Ride." "Oh Joy." "God the Father."
3. To develop more "feeling" and enthusiasm for the opera and the work in which the children were engaged.	3. "Evening Prayer."
III. *Principles of dancing learned:*	Creation of original dances to the music of:
1. That dance steps should fit the rhythm of the music.	1. "Dance with Me."
2. That there should be a variety of steps in order to avoid monotony.	2. "Witch's Ride."

IV. *Facts learned about musical productions:*

1. The opera and operetta:
   (*a*) An opera is a drama set to music, and the principal feature is the music, the story in most cases being banal.
   (*b*) There are three types of opera: (1) Grand opera, dealing with serious subjects; (2) romantic opera, dealing with the supernatural; (3) comic opera, dealing with light or humorous subjects.
   (*c*) An operetta is a musical play in which there are both speaking and singing.
2. Folk songs:
   (*a*) A folk song is a song that grows up among a race of people, nobody knowing the originator of it. It is characteristic of the specific race to which it belongs, and reflects their moods.
   (*b*) Folk songs used by Humperdinck in his score are—"Suse, Little Suse", "A Little Man Stands in the Woods", "Evening Prayer."
3. Muscial terms:
   (*a*) The "libretto" is made up of the verses that are sung.
   (*b*) The "score" is the orderly arrangement of the music of the opera so that the selections follow each other in sequence.

Discussion lessons:

1. Definition of the term opera, its characteristics, and the types of operas.
2. Definition of a folk song.
3. Meaning of musical terms used in discussions.

IV. *Facts learned about musical productions*—Continued.

3. Musical terms—Continued.
   (*c*) The "overture" is the music played before the first act by the orchestra; it puts the audience in the right frame of mind or mood for the opera; it may be sad or gay, or both, according to the type of opera it precedes.
   (*d*) There may also be an introduction to an act, called "entr'acte" or "intermezzo."

V. *Appreciation of committee responsibility*:

1. All members of the committee have to be adequately prepared, so that each can supplement the report of another or if necessary give the whole report himself.

Committee report on how Humperdinck came to write the opera.

2. Information gained.
   (*a*) Humperdinck was a modern German composer.
   (*b*) The first music written for the opera was originally intended for a domestic play given by Humperdinck's sister Frau Adelheid Wette.
   (*c*) Frau Adelheid Wette wrote the text of the opera and Humperdinck wrote the music.

VI. *Recognition and appreciation of various versions of the story:*	
1. That Humperdinck made the mother a sympathetic person instead of a wicked stepmother.	1. Comparison of the Humperdinck-Wette version of the story with the original Grimm fairy tale.
2. That Grimm's wood cutter became a broom maker.	2. Reading of story of the opera from different books.
3. That in Grimm it is Hansel who does most of the thinking and acting, while in the opera the brains of the family seem to have been bestowed upon Gretel.	
4. That the departure of the children to the woods was the result of breaking a valuable piece of property (an earthenware jug containing the precious milk) and not, as in the fairy tale, a means by which the parents hoped to rid themselves of their children.	
5. That various versions of opera stories add richness and appreciation of opera literature.	
VII. *Facts learned about the program note:*	
1. That the program note must contain information that will make the presentation more meaningful to the audience.	Writing program note for use in the programs actually distributed at the presentation of the play.
2. That it must be made up of complete thoughts, and that the ideas should follow logically.	
VIII. *Facts learned about making the program:*	
1. That the main part of the program names the characters in the play and persons taking the parts.	Study of make-up of different types of programs—for opera, theater, and concert.
2. That the program tells by whom the play is staged.	
3. That the place of action for every act and scene is noted on the program.	

VIII. *Facts learned about making the program*—Continued.	
4. That in a musical program the name of the composer is always given.	
5. That the name of the author of a play is always given.	
6. That a program note is sometimes included on the program.	
7. That some programs are more decorative and artistic than others.	
8. That advertising material is often inserted, as a means of making money for the theater.	
IX. *Standards set up by the children in choosing actors:*	
1. An actor should be able to take his responsibility.	1. Discussion of the qualities that we would like our actors to possess.
2. He should be able to put himself in his part and act as the character should.	2. Selection of casts.
3. He should be able to keep level-headed in an emergency.	
4. He should have a pleasing singing voice.	
X. *Facts learned about the outline of an opera:*	
1. That only the most important events are included in outlining a story.	Outlining of three acts of the opera.
2. That the events are listed in orderly sequence.	
3. That the ideas are expressed clearly and in condensed form and that no unnecessary words are used.	
4. That each step in an outline is numbered.	
5. That the sentences should be similarly constructed as far as possible, in order to preserve the unity of the whole.	

XI. *Development of the dialog:*

1. Facts learned:
   (*a*) That the conversation must be natural.
   (*b*) That there must be enough conversation to avoid a "thin" effect.
   (*c*) That the play must progress through the conversation of the characters.
2. Skills acquired:
   (*a*) To keep the story clearly in mind while concentrating on writing the dialogue.
   (*b*) To express one's self in correct grammatical forms.
   (*c*) To make use of new words.

Writing of dialog for a three-act musical play.

XII. *Abilities developed in dramatization:*

1. To gather together ideas received from the reading of the various books and to reproduce them in an entirely original manner.
2. To speak spontaneously before the group.
3. To act with poise before the group.

Free dramatization of the entire play.

XIII. *Principles of drama learned:*

1. That an actor must put himself entirely into the role he is playing, and should not be concerned with making an impression upon the audience.
2. That an actor should never stand with his back to the audience.
3. That he should talk loudly enough and distinctly enough to be easily understood.
4. That he should remember his lines so that he does not confuse the other actors.

Dramatization of play using playlet written by the class.

XIII. *Principles of drama learned*—Continued.

5. That scenery shifting should be done as quickly and as noiselessly as possible.
6. That less confusion results in stage shifting if each person has a definite job to do.

XIV. *Construction:*

1. Skills developed:
   - (*a*) To use a hammer correctly, holding it at the base of the handle.
   - (*b*) To use corrugated fasteners.
   - (*c*) To place boards, in making a screen, so that the sides are parallel.
   - (*d*) To nail two similar screens to the ends of parallel boards.
   - (*e*) To brace framework at corners.
2. Knowledge used:
   - (*a*) That a yard is three feet.
   - (*b*) That a square has four equal sides.
   - (*c*) That the middle of a line can be found by dividing the length in half and then measuring that from either end of the line.
   - (*d*) That the middle of a line may be found by bisecting it with a compass.

1. Construction of "Cookie House" framework.

2. Determination of the amount of lumber needed for the "Cookie House" framework.

XIV. *Construction*—Continued.

3. Problems solved:
   (*a*) If our house is to be 4 feet long, 3 feet wide, and 4 feet high, how many 4-foot strips of lumber will we need? How many 3-foot strips?
   (*b*) If we want the point on our roof approximately 2 feet higher than the rest of our house, how many 2-foot strips will we need to order? (Sides of the roof were braced with string.)
   (*c*) What is the total of the number of feet of lumber required to build the "Cookie House"? (Diagrams were drawn on the board.)

XV. *Art skills developed:*

1. To make kaleidoscopic designs.
2. To use bright harmonious color combinations.
3. To make crayon strokes close together so that vivid color is produced.
4. To cover a box with construction paper—drawing paper neatly over edges and pasting it on the inside.
5. To saw cardboard.
6. To paint on a large scale.
7. To paint in perspective.
8. To paint tree foliage—by daubing paint, holding brush by the end of the handle.
9. To use tempera paints.
10. To use lovely color combinations.
11. To paint figures in action. (Each child painted the scene that he desired. The pictures were then chosen according to the part of the story that each portrayed.)

1. Use of crayons to make cookies and candy canes to decorate the cookie house.
2. Crayoning cookies and canes on wrapping paper to make side screens for the stage.
3. Making witch's oven from cardboard packing box covered with construction paper.
4. Painting scenery for the scene in the woods (act II).
5. Painting of wall frieze of the story.
6. Designing program covers.
7. Sewing pastel tinted cheese cloth on wire wing frames.

XV. *Art skills developed*—Con.

12. To draw in miniature.
13. To hold cloth taut while sewing over wire.
14. To space stitches more evenly.

Music

1. *Score used.*—Elsmith, Berta. "Hansel and Gretel." Birchard & Co.

2. *Songs learned:*

1. Suse, Little Suse.
2. God, the Father.
3. Grouchy.
4. Little Brother, Dance with Me.
5. Ra-La-La.
6. A Little Man Stands in the Woods.
7. Sandman Song.
8. Evening Prayer.
9. Nibbling, Cribbling Mousie.
10. Witch's Ride.
11. Oh, Joy.

3. *Rhythms used for dances.*—"Witch's Ride", "Little Brother Dance with Me", "Gingerbread Boys' Dance", "Oh, Joy", "Angels' Pantomime", "Evening Prayer."

4. *Records used.*—Victor records, 22176-B, 22176-A, 9075-B, 9075-A.

Some New Words Learned

anger	version	cooperate
supposedly	possibilities	search
condense	domestic	alarmed
converse	combined	discover
unnecessary	effort	nibble
synopsis	enchanted	destroyed
included	form	folksong
vocal	embark	opera
returned	properties	libretto
brief	agreed	text
idle	garlands	score
composer	mysterious	overture
based	appears	glimmering
narrative	cast	operetta

Materials Used

1. Lumber.
2. Corrugated fasteners.
3. ¾-inch nails.
4. Brown paper.
5. Needles.
6. String (heavy).
7. Crayons.
8. Tempera paints.
9. Manila paper.
10. Cheesecloth.
11. Bright-colored wools.
12. Dyes.
13. Unbleached muslin.
14. Bright-colored cambrics.
15. Hat wire (for angel's wings).

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